



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on March 8, 2013

Budget Cuts? Not for \$50 Million Contract for New TSA Uniforms

Just when you think it can't get any crazier, the Washington politicians go another step higher on the lunacy scale.

With the automatic spending cuts, known as the sequester, cutting only two cents per dollar out of the bloated federal budget, a budget that's grown 71 percent faster than inflation over the past two decades, the federal scaremongers are rushing around putting padlocks on control towers at the nation's airports.



We're supposed to think a measly two percent cut in spending, something most any business or household could handle if their spending was out of control and unsustainable, makes it impossible for the government to launch an aircraft carrier or operate control towers.

Still, if we're lucky enough to avoid a crash landing, the treat we'll see inside the airports is something new and special, a handsome conglomeration of sharp-dressed government employees, newly outfitted at taxpayers' expense and ready to squeeze the legs of incoming passengers and snap a few naked photos.

Just two days before the automatic federal spending cuts took effect, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced it had awarded a \$50 million one-year contract for new uniforms for airport screeners, clothes that will be manufactured partially in Mexico.

Last November, the nation's 50,000 newly unionized airport screeners ratified their first collective bargaining agreement.

The contract gives screeners the federal perk of having "more say in what they wear on the job," reported the Star-Ledger in Newark.

Screeners not only have "more say" about what they wear and how they look but they also got the nation's increasingly financially stretched taxpayers to pick up the \$50 million tab.

For the 50,000 employees, that's \$1,000 each for the new outfits, just for the first year.

The lucky company that was awarded the \$50 million contract is VF Imagewear, owner of Lee Brand and Wrangler Hero. Nice stuff, sort of the look of a fake Montana cowboy.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said the sequester will force furloughs at the TSA and is warning of increased waiting times at airports, plus there might be no one in the control towers, but the good news is that the non-furloughed screeners who are still at work will be looking mighty fine.

What taxpayers are buying for the screeners is listed on a TSA fact sheet to employees: "TSA will provide your initial uniform issue consisting of 3 long sleeve shirts, 3 short sleeve shirts, 2 pairs of trousers, 2 ties, and one belt, sweater, socks, and jacket."



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on March 8, 2013

That's everything but shoes and underwear. To have the shoes be style coordinated with the new outfits and able to help agents from falling as they chase jihadists around the airports, the employee-supplied shoes are federally mandated to be "black leather with non-slip soles."

Also, instead of just having the screeners tell the government their shirt and trouser sizes, the TSA fact sheet says there will be special fittings: "You will be measured for your new uniforms at your first orientation session."

If taxpayers are paying for these individual fittings, say at \$30 each, that's another \$1,500,000, unless VF Imagewear is picking up the tab.

I checked Wrangler's website and I can't see how the government's cost could total \$1,000 per employee, especially on a \$50 million order with truckload deliveries.

Buying just one item at a time on the website, not 50,000, Wrangler Hero cargo pants are \$19.50, a Hero jacket is \$19.99, Hero shirts are 10.99. Add the socks, one belt, one sweater and two ties to the price of the six shirts and the two pairs of trousers and I get a total bill of \$186.00 per screener for the whole deal, \$814.00 less than the \$1,000.00 the taxpayers are paying.

The new uniforms will be "manufactured in the U.S. and Mexico" says the TSA, even though The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 specifically requires the TSA to purchase uniforms made in the United States. The federal bureaucrats got around the Made-in-America manufacturing requirement by saying Mexico couldn't be excluded as a manufacturer because of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"Please don't yell at the customs officers or the TSA officers," said Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitan, warning of the inevitability of long lines at the airports. "They aren't responsible for sequester." Plus, at \$1,000 a pop, they're looking real snazzy.

Ralph R. Reiland is an associate professor of economics and the B. Kenneth Simon professor of free enterprise at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



[Subscribe](#)

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.